

AUGUST 2022 NEWSLETTER

LAND MATTERS

by Matt Reetz, executive director

madison
AUDUBON



I'm accustomed to folks raising an eyebrow in my direction every so often. Sometimes it's because of my nerdy "Ornithophile" t-shirt. Sometimes it's because of a groan-worthy bird pun I just attempted to land. And sometimes, folks are pleasantly surprised when I tell them that although Madison Audubon is undoubtedly a bird organization for bird enthusiasts, we invest a lot of time, energy, and resources into land projects.

The fact of the matter is that land matters. It is one of the best conservation tools for protecting and bolstering our native bird populations. Birds, pollinators, and other wildlife need land to reproduce, find food, and take safe harbor on their long migrations. People, too, need access to

land and all the wonderful benefits that come with being in nature. The more birds that use the land and the more people who visit those lands, the better. Allow me to share examples of just three land acquisition projects (though there were others!) we have tackled in the last few years, and what they mean for

conservation. I'll start by saying that none of it would be possible without the exceptional generosity of you, our members and supporters.

While we work hard to acquire grants and partner matches for these projects, what we've been able to accomplish in land protection has really come from the numerous donations and encouragement of our members. In total, Madison Audubon has protected 3,819 acres in Columbia and Jefferson Counties—that's more than one acre per Madison Audubon member. Thank you!

Example 1: Springer Pond addition to Faville Marsh

One of the (many) highlights of Faville Grove Sanctuary is the sweeping view looking across Faville Marsh. This unique, 100-acre wetland features a tamarack bog, floating sphagnum moss beds, and emergent vegetation that supports an incredible diversity of plants and animals. Over the years, Madison Audubon has worked diligently to protect and restore the Marsh. However, prior to 2019, Springer Pond—20 acres of open water and seasonally emergent wetland—as well as 43 acres of surrounding croplands, fencerows, and marsh edge were completely unprotected. When the

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land became available for purchase, we moved quickly. By acquiring this land, Madison Audubon has been able to remove a man-made fishing pond and restore natural water flow, plant the croplands to native vegetation (now lovingly called Fat Goose Prairie), protect the marsh from agricultural runoff, erosion, and future development, and begin providing incredible nesting habitat for declining grassland birds and migratory wildfowl. And don't forget that view!

Example 2: Benade addition at Goose Pond

Judi Benade is a long-time member and supporter of Madison Audubon who lives near Goose Pond Sanctuary. In partnership with Goose Pond staff and volunteers, Judi and her husband restored 25 acres of their property to tall-grass native prairie in 2004. That restoration created valuable habitat for breeding grassland and shrub birds like Northern Harrier, Willow Flycatcher, Field Sparrow, Dickcissel and more.

Sixteen years later, Judi approached Madison Audubon about whether we would like to acquire the prairie and an additional 45 acres of land. Spoiler alert: the answer was "yes!" Since purchasing the property in 2020, we've done significant work to control invasive species and have already restored another 16 acres of cropland to native prairie. Furthermore, this property is within the Yahara Watershed, which eventually flows to Lakes Mendota, Monona, Wingra, Waubesa, and beyond. Conversion of the cropland to quality native grasslands will help filter and store runoff to benefit water quality in the chain of lakes to the south. We will look for future opportunities to protect lands in the area to create a large, continuous landscape of native habitat.

Example 3: Otsego Marsh Uplands

One of the centerpieces of Madison Audubon's Otsego Marsh property is



Hawkos Pond, a 16-acre shallow, spring-fed pond with a lovely diversity of birds, insects, amphibians and fish. The pond is surrounded by oak and hickory woodlands and pine plantations, but until recently the property lacked any grassland habitats native to that area, hampering nesting for the waterfowl and turtles of Hawkos Pond. The main body of the property lies on the east side of Old County Road F. In 2020, we purchased an additional 36 acres on the west side of the road that was mostly farmland, but included a small upland woodlot and a corner of the wetland that was cut off by the road. Our crew is working to restore all of these habitats to their native glory, as well as adding additional wetlands for frogs, toads, and nesting ducks. One

day, the prairies will be home to nesting Bobolinks, meadowlarks, turtles, and more, and the woodlot will become a vibrant oak savanna once again. By purchasing this land, we removed the sediment and nutrient erosion into the wetland, and created a continuum of habitat for all sorts of species in the animal kingdom. Such a great thing to celebrate!

As a nationally-accredited land trust, Madison Audubon is proud to protect 3,819 total acres—land open for you to visit, marvel at, explore, and dream big dreams for. On behalf of the plants and animals which call these acres sanctuary, and thousands of people who enjoy them each year, thank you for your support.

IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU.

The land purchases described in this article were conserved using individual member donations. That means your donation from a few years ago is still yielding increasing rewards as we steward these habitats! What a feeling it must be for everyone who helped us protect these special places and the critters that call them home. Thank you!

We're excited to share that we anticipate adding more parcels to our sanctuaries in the coming months, and we hope our supporters will again join our efforts.

Visit the places you helped save and see their value for yourself. Find maps and more at madisonaudubon.org/land

A SEASON FOR SCIENCE

by Emma Raasch, Mark Martin, Susan Foote-Martin, and Graham Steinhauer,
Goose Pond team

This summer has been yet another wonderful season for citizen science with our volunteers and neighbors, who contribute so much to the fields of conservation research and biology. Two recent projects that stand out in our minds are the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey and Purple Martin banding.

For 39 years, Goose Pond Sanctuary staff and volunteers have participated in the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey, a DNR citizen-based monitoring program that provides information on the population trends, status, and distribution of Wisconsin's twelve frog and single toad species.

This year, our group visited 10 survey stops beginning at Otsego Marsh and ending at Goose Pond. Like most years, the trill of chorus frogs and the high-pitched 'peeping' of spring peepers dominated the earliest survey period (April 8–30), but we were lucky to hear leopard frogs and even wood frogs! Wood frogs are not often recorded on our survey because they have the shortest breeding period of any Wisconsin frog, are uncommon in the

southern part of the state, and are often drowned out by the resonant spring peepers and chorus frogs.

We heard the most species during the second survey period (May 20–June 5): gray tree frog, Cope's gray tree frog, American toad, green frog, spring peeper, chorus frog, and northern leopard frog. It was difficult to discern other calls among the shrill cries of the two tree frogs, but we were excited to record the American toads during their short calling period.

The third survey period (July 1–15) was dominated by the low strum of the green frogs, though a few tree frogs joined the chorus. At Mud Lake Wildlife Area, we found six smaller green frogs that overwintered as tadpoles and recently metamorphosed into frogs. Over the nearly four decades, frog numbers have remained fairly stable. It is amazing to see the species numbers rebound after drought years.

We hope the Anura populations remain strong!



Madison Audubon is your local Audubon chapter, serving 10 counties in southern Wisconsin.

Together with our members, we work to protect and improve habitat for birds and other wildlife through land acquisition and management, education, and advocacy.



The Purple Martin is a striking bird with a beautiful voice that performs aerial acrobatics while snapping up insects. Large Purple Martin colonies migrate south in the winter, primarily to Brazil, and return to familiar breeding grounds every spring.

Goose Pond staff and volunteers assisted Dick Nikolai, from the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association, with the banding of Purple Martins at the Amish community near Dalton in Marquette County. Over the course of two days in July, we visited four farms, where 580 young Purple Martins have received a flashy new anklet. Many of the nests had fledged young, otherwise our band numbers would have been much higher.

Amish families are really helping increase Purple Martin numbers in their communities in Wisconsin. On July 12, we started at the Jacob Petersheim farm and ended up with 168 banded young. The Petersheim family cares for seven 14-unit houses. It was amazing to see that 97 of the 98 nest sites were occupied by Purple Martins.

This is the fifth year that we banded together with Dick, making 2,823 total birds! With an estimated statewide



population around 30,000 that means we've banded around 1.9%. The association uses the data to study migration, survivorship, health, productivity, phenology, climate change impacts, and more.

It takes a full team to make this banding assembly line run smoothly: a bander, a data recorder, a person to open the bands, someone to raise and lower the boxes, a person to keep track of which birds go into which compartment, and a half dozen people to carry birds to the banding station and back. We can band about one bird per minute at full capacity. Thanks to volunteers, staff, Dick, and of course the Purple Martin landlords who take care of the birds and allow us to band on their properties.

DOING OUR BEST FOR WILDLIFE

by Roger Packard, Faville Grove Sanctuary resident manager

Madison Audubon is widely recognized for excellence in land restoration and management. Our large, intensively managed sanctuaries provide prime habitat for diverse, native plants and animals. Madison Audubon's focus on management, together with its efforts to connect people with land and to advocate for public policies that benefit the natural world, put the organization at the forefront of the land trust movement.

Traditionally, land trusts have emphasized legal protection of land, a necessary and important function, but as the land trust community increasingly recognizes, we need to do more.

Having staff and volunteers in residence at each sanctuary is a key part of Madison Audubon's land management efforts. When living at the sanctuary, it's easier to know what needs to be done and when, whether it's conducting controlled burns or tackling weeds or collecting seed. And it's easier to be available at all hours, for early-morning bird surveys or late-night mop-up after a burn, for example.

But there's another, less obvious, benefit to having resident stewards: it allows us to build stronger relationships with our neighbors, helping the sanctuary become part of the community.

Neighbors can support the sanctuary effort in many ways, large and small. Both Faville Grove and Goose Pond sanctuaries would be very different without the close

partnerships we have with nearby land-owners. Faville Grove Sanctuary alone includes 14 separately-acquired parcels of land, all contiguous or in proximity and part of an ecologically-significant landscape. That represents a lot of friendly collaborations over the years!

When we recently asked the Faville Grove interns what unexpected things they've encountered so far this summer, one student expressed surprise at the degree of interaction she saw with the neighbors. And not just land negotiations, but chance greetings on the roads or cooperating to control weeds, seeking advice on land management, helping to maintain and monitor bird boxes, counting bats, offering use of their shed when we need it, even hosting a fundraiser. All these interactions, no matter how small, make for better habitat in the long run.

Madison Audubon's land management model may not be the least expensive around, but it's one of the best. After all, our native wildlife deserves our best efforts.



THE HEART OF CITIZEN SCIENCE

by Brenna Marsicek, director of communications and outreach



Since our last newsletter, a whole lot of baby birds have taken to Wisconsin's skies. One of summer's delights is to observe the energetic busy-ness of birds. The air is positively alive with motion and noise! Our Bald Eagle Nest Watch volunteers now reminisce about the antics of the eaglets this spring as they jockeyed for food or practiced their first wing flaps. The Kestrel Nest Box Monitoring Program volunteers get a warm fuzzy feeling thinking about their fuzzy chicks they helped band this summer and how many flew from the box. Passionate Bird Collision Corps volunteers are working on the other side of the life spectrum to keep these busy birds alive and away from windows.

This is what motivates me most in this work: the fact that science—and certainly citizen science—is not just numerical, it's emotional.

To us, the number of chicks in a nest is not just a number, it is a signal of hope, of beauty. The number of birds documented as victims of window strikes is not just a statistic, it is a loss to mourn and to prevent in the future. The people who do citizen science are soulfully connected to their communities.

This summer, as we wrapped up the Bald Eagle Nest Watch with nests in 29 counties, we realized that amidst the 71 nest failures, our volunteers joyfully documented 60 eaglets fledge from 45 nests. A few of our BENW volunteers even rescued two eaglets from certain death this spring (more at madisonaudubon.org/benw-rescue).

What incredible commitment from this group of bird lovers!

Similarly, the Kestrel Nest Box Monitoring program confirmed 270 kestrel chicks fledging from 72 of our boxes. We were lucky to band 255 kestrel chicks and 45 adults this year, with help from volunteers and coordinator Brand Smith, the Central Wisconsin Kestrel Research program, and Kurt Reed in Fort Atkinson. It doesn't matter how many kestrel babies you hold and help band, it never ever gets old.

In addition, this summer we finished up our eighth Bird Collision Corps survey season and began thinking about our fall program. The time in between seasons is spent cultivating relationships with site partners and brainstorming ways to make this work even better for volunteers, site hosts, and birds. This summer we are creating a video series showing how homeowners—many of whom are BCC volunteers—have "fixed" their own problem windows using a variety of bird-safe methods in hopes to inspire others do to the same. Find resources at madisonaudubon.org/preventing-collisions.

What it all boils down to is heart. Those who donate their time to citizen science also invest some of their emotional bandwidth. We are constantly inspired by them. Volunteers: thank you for all you give to birds, the birding community, and Madison Audubon!

SUMMER STORIES

by Carolyn Byers, director of education

Summer has been a time for resetting and recharging for our education team. We're teaching, but we're also full of plans for the fall!

Get your conservation on

Summer means Conservation Academy with Operation Fresh Start. Our partnership with OFS began in 2014 to help connect their young adults with environmental professionals and give them meaningful hands-on experience. Thanks for helping us collect a pile of spiderwort seed at Faville Grove Sanctuary, OFS!

Wonderful water

Our favorite story from this summer has to be exploring water critters with the kids from Vera Court Neighborhood Center. We met at Cherokee Marsh North on one hot July day and walked over to a patch of water surrounded by cattails. We all crept up to the small wooden dock and jumped up at the same time. These sneaky tactics meant that all of the kids got to see the rapid succession of tiny splashes as little frogs hopped to safety. The kiddos used nets to find water bugs (including an absolutely giant spider!) and I had the best bucket-dip of my life with two tadpoles and several macroinvertebrates. There were also countless teeny tiny toads on the trail. The kids agreed that we need to do more water critter exploration in the future.

Nature for teachers too

Most of the time we spend with teachers is a scramble of planning, gathering gear, teaching high-energy kids, and debriefing after each lesson. This summer we carved out some time to build relationships in



nature with our teachers—and learn about creatures too! We identified birds on a neighborhood walk, found mayfly larvae casings at Olin Park, and plan to do some prairie walking and nature journaling at Goose Pond. We love helping teachers grow in their nature knowledge... and getting time to soak in the sunset with them!

Fall joy

Fall is always exciting, and this fall even more so. We're hoping more community centers will have the capacity to resume our partnerships—most of these have been on pause during the pandemic. Our new full-time educator will start in early September and she is going to be a wonderful addition to the team. With more education staff, our partnerships can expand to include more classrooms, more kids, and more smiles. That is something to be joyful about!

FALL 2022 EVENTS

A Swift Night Out

Date: Sun., Aug. 28, 7–8:30 PM

Location: TBD

Led by: Madison Audubon & WI
Chimney Swift Working Group

Citizen Science: Bird Collision Corps

Play a critical role in studying the problem of bird-window collisions in Madison.

Training and materials provided.

Season: Sep. 12 through Nov. 1

Info: madisonaudubon.org/bcc

Land Trust Days:

Fall Prairies at Faville Grove

Date: Sun., Sep. 18, 9–11 AM

Location: Madison Audubon's Faville
Grove Sanctuary (Lake Mills)

Led by: Drew Harry, Roger Packard, &
David Musolf

Beyond Backyard Birding*

Date: Sat., Sep. 24, 7:30–9:30 AM

Location: Cherokee Marsh (Madison)

Led by: Ashley Olah & Maia Persche

Speaker Series: John Bates

John Bates, the Associate Curator of Birds from the Chicago Field Museum, will talk about his recent research excursion to Antarctica.

Date: Tue., Sep. 27, 7–8 PM

Location: Madison Public Library
Meadowridge Branch and virtual

Beginning Birders: October

Date: Sat., Oct. 8, 9–10:30 AM

Location: Cherokee Marsh (Madison)

Led by: Kaitlin Svabek

Birding at Goose Pond

Date: Sun., Oct. 30, 1–3 PM

Location: Madison Audubon's Goose
Pond Sanctuary (Arlington)

Led by: Mark Martin, Sue Foote-Martin,
and Graham Steinhauer

Cemetery Birding

Date: Tue., Nov. 1, 4–5:30 PM

Location: Forest Hill Cemetery
(Madison)

Led by: Kaitlin Svabek

Birdability Week is October 17-23!

Join us in celebration of this week focused on accessibility in the birding community!

Accessible Birding*

Date: Mon., Oct. 17, 5–6:30 PM

Location: Badger Prairie County Park
(Verona)

Led by: Madison Audubon & Access
Ability Wisconsin

Speaker Series: Outdoor Access Panel

Date: Tue., Oct. 18, 7–8 PM

Location: TBD and virtual

Saturday Sit

Date: Sat., Oct. 22, 7 AM–4 PM

Location: Warner Park

Led by: Madison Audubon & WI Council
of the Blind and Visually Impaired

Visit birdability.org to learn more about the organization and week.

* Outdoor wheelchair access is available.
To register, visit: madisonaudubon.org/events

FALL 2022 COURSES & EXPERIENCES

MONARCH TAGGING (Visit our website for times and dates)

We will teach you how to safely catch, handle, tag, and release a monarch, all in the name of science. \$10/adult, \$5/youth.

ALL ABOUT HUMMINGBIRDS (Sept. 8, 10, 11)

Join us for an exploration of these tiny, beautiful birds and learn how to attract them to your yard! \$60/person.

PREVENTING BIRD-WINDOW COLLISIONS AT HOME (Sept. 15)

Learn about bird-window collisions, what you can do, and the process of creating bird saver curtains! Free seminar, an optional \$40 fee covers one custom-sized curtain kit.

BIRDING BY EAR: FALL MEETUP (Sept. 16)

Participants of our Birding by Ear course are invited to our autumn meet-up at Lake Farm County Park. Co-hosted with Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired.

THE ART OF FALL LANDSCAPES (Sept. 17)

Learn how to capture the beauty of autumnal landscapes. We will have some art supplies you may use, but you're encouraged to bring your favorites. \$20/person.

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BIRDS: WINTER EDITION (Nov. 10, 12)

A great introductory class for anyone who loves to watch birds and wants to learn more about the most common species seen and heard. \$20/person.

For more details and to register: madisonaudubon.org/events



ANYONE CAN GO BIRDING

Accessibility is a crucial consideration when it comes to getting out in nature. How can we know what a place is like before getting there?

Birdability has created a crowd-sourced map that provides important accessibility information for local natural areas so you can know before you go! Visit the Birdability Map at gis.audubon.org/birdability

For questions about the map or contributing site reviews, contact Kaitlin Svabek, Wisconsin Birdability Captain, at ksvabek@madisonaudubon.org

A LEGACY FOR THE BIRDS: MAKE YOUR MARK!

As a dedicated supporter of Madison Audubon, you have contributed to bird and habitat conservation, outdoor education, and stronger legal protection for birds. Thank you!

You can ensure that all of your wishes will continue regarding your family, your mark on the world, and even your influence on bird protection, by writing your will.

August is national Make-a-Will Month. Did you know that almost 70% of Americans don't have a will? This is astounding, and easily solved. Writing a will does not have to be complicated or expensive.

Madison Audubon has partnered with FreeWill, a free online resource that guides you through creating your own legally valid will in just 20-30 minutes. This tool works best for people who do not have complicated estates. And, you can use it for free regardless of whether you make any provisions for Madison Audubon.

If your estate planning does include Madison Audubon, however, please let us know. We would love to thank you for honoring our mission in this way and for helping secure the future of bird and land protection in southern Wisconsin. We can also add you to our Kestrel Legacy Circle, which offers special birdy opportunities for members and can be anonymous. You can read more about the Kestrel Legacy Circle at madisonaudubon.org/legacy.

We hope you will celebrate Make-a-Will Month and make your mark on the future (and future birds!) by speaking with your financial advisor about leaving a planned gift to Madison Audubon or by independently completing your will through FreeWill. You can begin your FreeWill by visiting madisonaudubon.org/freewill.

Contact Becky Abel, Director of Philanthropy, for more information about the Kestrel Legacy Circle (she's a member!), using FreeWill (she's done it!), or working with your own advisor to create a will: babel@madisonaudubon.org

NEW MADISON AUDUBON DONORS MAY-JULY 2022

The amazing donors who contribute to Madison Audubon throughout the year make so much good possible. You can find the full list of donors who have contributed to Madison Audubon this year at madisonaudubon.org/2022-donors.



EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT!



No computer? No problem!

We know not everyone has a computer or wants to spend time on one to get updates from their favorite bird organization (ahem!). However, we care about all of our members, and want you to be as informed as your tweeting and typing counterparts.

Madison Audubon is now offering limited, monthly paper updates mailed to your home. These updates provide all the good information that comes to email-receiving members in print, so you can stay in the loop on the good things that happen in between these quarterly newsletters. Note: active membership is required to opt-in to monthly mailed updates.

To enroll, fill out and mail this section to:

Madison Audubon,
1400 E Washington Ave #170,
Madison WI 53703.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

PHOTO CREDITS

P1: Coneflower and butterfly illustration by Kaitlin Svabek/Madison Audubon

P2: Prairie restoration illustration by Kaitlin Svabek/Madison Audubon

P5: Purple Martins by Kaitlin Svabek/Madison Audubon | Banding volunteers by Brenna Marsicek/Madison Audubon

P6: Northern Harrier by Arlene Koziol

P7: American Kestrel by Kaitlin Svabek/Madison Audubon

P8: Child holding a toad by Carolyn Byers/Madison Audubon

P10: Field trip participants, one using an Access Ability Wisconsin Outdoor Wheelchair by Caitlyn Schuchardt

P11: American Kestrel by Mick Thompson | Black-capped Chickadee illustration by Brenna Marsicek

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